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Clay Twp. gets help on cleanup

Highland County Board of Commissioners Deputy Clerk Nicole Oberrecht provides information on CDBG grant funding during Wednesday's meeting of commissioners. Commissioner Jeff Duncan is pictured in the background.



Angela Shepherd | The Times-Gazette

Hearing held for county CDBG funding

By **Angela Shepherd**
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Clay Township has battled a growing bill for the cleanup of a property that was previously deemed a public nuisance, and a little more help came on Wednesday as commissioners approved the township's application for additional grant money. The Highland County

Board of Commissioners assisted the township late last year with grant money through the county's solid waste district. But, as previously reported, what started as a cleanup of more than 1,500 tires turned into much more with the amount of trash that was also discovered on the property. Clay Township's most recent application to the

county was also for recycling grant dollars through the Ross Pickaway Highland Fayette Solid Waste District. A newly-adopted policy by commissioners for those annual dollars stipulates that townships can apply for up to \$5,000 through the end of June, with the townships required to match what is

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Four sent to prison on drug charges

Greenfield woman gets intervention

By **Angela Shepherd**
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Four defendants on Wednesday were sentenced in Highland County Common Pleas Court to prison, and all of them for drug-related offenses.

Scott W. Bentley Jr., 49, pled guilty to two counts of fourth-degree felony aggravated trafficking in methamphetamine, and one count of fifth-degree felony heroin trafficking. Seven other counts of possession and trafficking were dismissed per the plea agreement.

Bentley was sentenced to nine months on each of the three counts, with judge Rocky Coss ordering those sentences to run consecutively, for a total of 27 months in prison.

The defendant was also ordered to pay more than \$1,200 in restitution.

Bentley said he had been to prison two previous times. He was released from his most recent stint last July. According to his indictment, the offenses

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Scott Bentley, right, is pictured in Highland County Common Pleas Court on Wednesday with defense attorney J.D. Wagoner.



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Photo courtesy of Robert Kroeger

This painting by Robert Kroeger depicts a barn on New Vienna Road in Highland County. Kroeger said its hand-hewn beams and irregular stonework indicate it was built in the 1800s, the same period many barns in the area were constructed. The nearby farmhouse dates to 1883.

Paintings benefit 4-H

Artist plans to paint more barns to help historical society

By **Jeff Gilliland**
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Sandy Shoemaker wasn't sure what she had gotten herself into by agreeing to take a man she did not know around to see Highland County barns. But she had read a group email from Vicki Knauff with the Highland County Historical Society, learned that someone was looking for barns to paint, and figured she would reach out.

"I noticed that nobody answered the email and I said, 'You know what, I know a lot about barns in Highland County,'" said Shoemaker, who was raised on a Highland County farm and spent 27 years working for the local Farm Service Agency.

So Shoemaker gave Knauff a call and told her to give Robert Kroeger, the former Cincinnati area dentist interested in painting local barns, her phone number.

Before long Kroeger had an appointment to meet Shoemaker at her Grabill Road home.

Shoemaker said she still wasn't sure what she'd got her self into, but when Kroeger pulled up in a Lexus, she felt a little better. Before long they were checking out barns all over the northern part of the county.

"He said, 'I don't want pretty barns, I want old ones that are almost falling down, ones that are a 100 years old or more,'" Shoemaker said. "The best thing he likes about a good barn is the story that goes with it."

That made Shoemaker rethink where she'd take Kroeger, but that didn't take long and, "We had a grand time and hit it off really well," she said.

"The one thread that was common was that every barn we went to seemed to have a 4-H animal in it," Shoemaker added. "No matter where we stopped, there was a connection to 4-H."

That connection between barns Kroeger had long admired and 4-H, something he knew little about, piqued an interest. Not long thereafter, following an invitation from Sandy and her

husband Tim Shoemaker, Kroeger attended his first Highland County Fair. It was there, while watching a goat show, that it dawned on him what he wanted to do with his paintings – help 4-H.

Last Saturday, five of the paintings Kroeger donated to the Highland County Extension Support Committee raised \$1,700, a large portion of the \$6,000-plus the committee raised during its annual fundraising dinner.

"As I mentioned when I addressed the audience, this wasn't just about raising money; it helped preserve a lot of Ohio history and bring it to life – especially through your publishing my essays on the barns," Kroeger said in an email to The Times-Gazette this week.

After Kroeger announced his interest in local barns, he contacted The Times-Gazette to see if it would be interested in publishing the essays he writes that go along with his paintings. It's his way of preserving

a piece of history he admires.

As part of a larger project, Kroeger has painted barns from all over the state. When he gets to 50, he hopes to publish a book containing the paintings and essays. He'd also like to help 4-H programs in other parts of the state.

But he's not done with Highland County yet. Sandy Shoemaker said that just last Saturday she and Kroeger visited 12 more barns, mostly in the southern part of the county. He plans to paint and write about them, too, then sell some of the paintings to benefit the Highland County Historical Society. That's because it was the historical society that put him in touch with Tim and Sandy Shoemaker.

"It would be a great fundraiser for us and we would certainly be appreciative," historical society member Avery Applegate said.

She said that will likely take place sometime next summer.

Meanwhile, Jeff Parry, chairman of the Highland County Extension Support Committee

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Showers possible
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